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## Editorial

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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021





WE ARE FORTUNATE IN THIS ISSUE to have a number of papers that break new ground in source study, in making new connections between different works, in applying theory in new and interesting ways, and in bringing neglected authors to our attention.

Amber Dunai's article looks at the traces of *Pearl* in C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, rather than making the more common comparison to Dante's *Inferno*; she finds that there are interesting parallels not just between events but between settings, characters, and themes as well. Continuing with Lewis, Benita Huffman Muth takes a fresh look at the Eve characters in *Perelandra* and *The Magician's Nephew* and explores how Lewis, as he creates a supposal rather than an allegory, is free to fracture and re-combine elements of Milton's depictions of Eve, Adam, and the Serpent from *Paradise Lost* to create new characters and new approaches to creation and temptation.

Megan Fontenot's exceptional paper on J.R.R. Tolkien and Francis Thompson won the Alexei Kondratiev award for best student paper at Mythcon this past summer. And with good reason; while Thompson's poetry has often been discussed, she has discovered in Thompson's essays a neglected influence on Tolkien's thinking about mythology and subcreation and traced its impact on "On Fairy-stories" and his cosmogony.

Colin J. Cutler looks both back and forward to open up new areas of discussion about Tolkien's strongly-expressed opinion on Beorhthnoth's *ofermod* or overweening pride. Culter looks at other variants of the word in medieval sources to tease out further nuances about its contemporary usage, and applies what he discovers to Tolkien's posthumously published *The Fall of Arthur*.

"The Scouring of the Shire" is unjustly neglected in studies of *The Lord of the Rings*; many new readers find it jarring and unsatisfactory, and it was omitted entirely from the Peter Jackson films. Jerome Donnelly's approach acknowledges the way it is set apart from the rest of the book and explores the impact of the Nazi threat and English paranoia about Nazism on the chapter's action, themes, and language. The previous two papers touched on war in Tolkien's works; Victoria Holtz Wodzack returns to our pages with a further paper considering the plight of men maimed and wounded in war or otherwise in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*.

The philosophy of Rene Girard is proving to be very applicable to works of fantasy and particularly to considerations of desire and motivation in Tolkien's works. Carl P. Olson applies Girard's theory to a study of Frodo's motivations and role models in the early phases of *The Lord of the Rings*. It is encouraging to see Tolkien's theories about fantasy literature being taken as seriously as Todorov's or Bakhtin's; in many ways the ideas laid out in "On Fairy-stories" are actually more critically useful. Douglas Charles Kane uses these theories as a method to assess Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. Jordana Ashman Long brings both of these critical threads together—Tolkien and Girard—among other approaches in her discussion of A.S. Byatt's *Possession* as a romance. A consideration of genre continues with Susan Gorman's essay on the place of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* in the epic tradition. Dennis Wilson Wise closes out the article section of this issue with a look at the poetic technique of Paul Edwin Zimmer and traces his influences to J.R.R. Tolkien and Poul Anderson.

In our Notes and Letters section, we have a trip through Rudyard Kipling's fables about the origins of writing, a comment on a review in *Mythlore* #132, and a study of bilingual puns in Tolkien's work. We close with the usual extensive section of reviews.

If you would like to keep up with news relating to *Mythlore*, please follow us on Facebook, where we post advance notice of items accepted for upcoming issues, lists of items available for review, and so forth. If you teach a course related to fantasy and would like to have print copies of older issues of *Mythlore* to distribute, we do still have a number of copies remaining; please contact the editor at [mythlore@mythsoc.org](mailto:mythlore@mythsoc.org).

We have several special issues coming up. The Spring/Summer 2019 issue will be our official 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue and will include a history of the journal, among other special content. The Fall/Winter 2019 issue will be co-edited by *Mythlore* Advisory Board member Donna White and will focus on mythopoeic literature for children. In 2020 we also plan a special issue co-edited by Melanie Rawls on the works of Ursula K. Le Guin.

In addition to the members of the *Mythlore* Advisory Board, the Mythopoeic Society Council of Stewards, and our ever-dependable referees, I would also like to thank David Emerson for his assistance with proofreading. I'd also like to express my gratitude to Phillip Fitzsimmons, Reference and Digitization Librarian at Southwestern Oklahoma State University Libraries and our Administrator for *Mythlore* and Society Archives, who has been directing the team adding archival content to <http://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/>.

—Janet Brennan Croft